

Audience Research – Falk’s Visitor Motivations

Chaired by Antoinette Duplessis; Reporter, Jackie Armstrong

Antoinette introduced the topic with a summary of John Falk’s work, *The Five Minute Falk* (see Handout)

Questions and answers are drawn from two sessions, each with 9 participants.

Question: Do you see yourself or your visitors in these motivations?

Group – At the Archives of Ontario over 75% of visitors are genealogists. They seem to fit the *Recharger* category in that they get enjoyment from the activity. But they could also be seen as *Explorers* in that they have an intense curiosity about the subject. There seems to be lots of crossover between the two groups. The challenge is getting people to know that the Archives is more than just research.

Question: How do you choose which motivations to program for?

Antoinette – Try to accommodate all motivations. Go broad, mix approaches, layer information. The crux of the message is that it is important to communicate in many different ways.

Question: How can I apply these motivations to technology and online experiences?

Antoinette – In any setting visitors want to have an experience that’s unique and different from that of their friends. Find ways to allow visitors to customize their experiences. Falk talks about images that appeal to different motivations.

Question: Is it worth identifying your staff’s motivations within an institution?

Antoinette – Falk’s model is not a personality test. Motivations shift so much. Your motivation for working at a site is likely to be quite different than your motivation to visit one.

Question: Are visitor motivations culturally specific? Would they still be true in the context of mass tourism in China, for example?

Antoinette – Falk’s research was done in the US and his work doesn’t really delve into mentioning other cultures specifically although his work does state that every person has identity related needs and interests. The need to express one’s curiosity, to support being a good parent or to provide relief from the stresses of daily life is not unique to people who visit museums. These and other similar identity related needs are common to virtually all people in the 21st century, at least to those who have obtained some measure of economic, political and social security.

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Antoinette Duplessis - Hailing from New Brunswick, Antoinette has loved ‘all things museum’ since her early days as a history re-enactor camping outside the

New Brunswick Museum in Saint John. Antoinette has been the Assistant Curator at the Joseph Schneider Haus Museum in Kitchener since 2004. She has also worked at the former Waterloo Regional Children's Museum, the New Brunswick Museum and the York-Sunbury Museum in Fredericton. Internships and volunteer work at Kings Landing, The Admiral Digby Museum, The Redpath Museum and the Royal Ontario Museum helped round out her identity as a museum devotee. She holds a Master of Museum Studies from the University of Toronto and a Masters in Canadian History from the University of New Brunswick.